

orphans hired in various states of pornographic (though traditional) undress or chilling anonymity to say “the morality of these woman is compromised; they need to be saved by an altruistic European Christian hand.” Early Hollywood films continue this missionary trend in which Western men from Douglas Fairbanks to Bing Crosby liberate sensual but suppressed Oriental women.

With insight, humour, and a balanced approach, Amer guides us through the victimization of Muslims that occurred after 9/11 and is still going on, a fear mongering that places terrorist explosives under every innocent chador, burqua, niqab or abaya. She navigates us through ramifications of France’s 2004 law that “banned all ostentatious religious signs from French public schools” (to say nothing of similar prohibitions in our own province of Quebec).

The book’s visuals are extremely revealing, from cartoons in which a small child cannot find his mother amidst many covered women, to FIFA’s 2012 lifting of the ban on hijab resulting in an ebullient photo depicting the scarfed, enthusiastic members of the *Carolina Cyclones* soccer team.

Amer’s final chapters on “Veiling Through the Arts”—including stand-up comedy and hip-hop—are spectacular. From young Muslim American poets with lines like: “No I’m not bald under the scarf...No I would not like to defect/I’m already American...Yes I carry explosives/They’re called words/And if you don’t get up/Off your assumptions,/They’re going to blow you away,” to *Self-Portrait or the Virgin Mary* in which the ambivalent woman in white mysteriously raises far more questions than she answers.

Then there is the stunning performance video, *Les Illuminés*

“which takes us literally inside the burqa to film what a woman’s eyes see from behind the [crocheted] face veil that masks [them].” The covered woman sees external reality—often hostile, when people turn to stare—through a cross-hatching as sinister as prison bars. At the same time though, the “faceless, silenced” Muslim woman is the director of this scene, temporarily transforming the veil of oppression into one of power.

Each chapter begins with sharply pertinent quotes. Here is the wife of Turkey’s president setting the tone for “Politics and Sociocultural Practices of Veiling”: “My scarf covers my head not my brain.”

A simple necessary statement, confirming the importance of this book.

*Patricia Keeney is an award-winning poet, novelist and cultural critic who is translated and published internationally. Her newest novel One Man Dancing (Inanna Publications) and her latest poetry collection Orpheus In Our World (NeoPoiesis Press) were both published in 2016. Pat’s website can be found at [www.wapitiwords.ca](http://www.wapitiwords.ca)*

## NOT THE WHOLE STORY: CHALLENGING THE SINGLE MOTHER NARRATIVE

Lea Caragata and Judit Alcade, Eds. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2014

### REVIEWED BY JUDITH MINTZ

*Not the Whole Story: Challenging the Single Mother Narrative* offers its readers an intensive exploration into the gendered discrimination that affects the lives of lone mothers every day. As a single parent, I resonate with the notion of developing

more vocabulary with which to articulate the intersecting factors including race, poverty, age, and ability, that make single mothers’ lives so difficult. Started as a longitudinal social research project titled, “Lone Mothers: Building Social Inclusion” by the book’s editors, Lea Caragata and Judit Alcade, *Not the Whole Story* gives voice to the realities of single mothers whose struggles with education, alcoholism, sexual and domestic violence, and the social assistance system demand our attention. In spite of the women’s horrific experiences that this book describes, it offers insight to multiple readers, from academics and policy makers, to students and general public through the hope and growth inherent in its pages.

*Not the Whole Story* opens with a compelling introduction that explains the Lone Mothers project from which the 16 stories in the book developed. With the intent to bring critical examination to the subject position of single mothers in Canada, this five-year SSHRC-funded project, began in 2004 as a collective project with single mothers to challenge public discourse about them. The strongest part of the book is this introduction, which offers a social policy and historical context for the stories (Evans 2007; Little, 1998; Vosko 2002). The introduction also briefly explains the ways in which the methodology informs the structure of the book, and the issues that shape poverty, single motherhood, and social status. The evolution of the single mothers telling their stories is fascinatingly informed by Paulo Friere’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Concomitant with feminist participatory action research, the Lone Mothers Project gives voice to marginalized women who, through a guided group process, gain insights into their own situations and thus free themselves